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Charity Organization Society; and while futile schemes are being advocated, there are many—too many—needful reforms, well known by all experts to be desirable, which get left. I do say that legislation is all bad if and so far as it makes us forget that society is a structure of wills, and that if we do not look to the soundness of individual character—if we allow it to be perplexed and demoralized by a system of half-earnings, half-pauperism—the whole fabric must fall to pieces.

BERNARD BOSANQUET.

LONDON.

THE ETHICS OF AN ETERNAL BEING.

All human laws are fed by the one divine law: for it prevaileth as far as it listeth, and sufficeth for all, and surviveth all.—HERACLITUS.

If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.—PAUL OF TARSUS.

THOSE thinkers who believe in the possibility of ethics, that is, in freedom of choice, and consequent responsibility, hold these two propositions:

1. Human actions, in so far as they are human, that is, rational and deliberate, are actions performed for the sake of certain chosen ends.

2. The ethical character of actions is determined, primarily by these ends, and secondarily by the means chosen to reach them.

Now, all human ends may be included in one or the other of two classes: (1) ends which consist in *having*, and (2) ends which consist in *being*. No man ever acts rationally unless with a view either to having something, or to being something.

The things which a man may *have* are very various,—wealth, honor, pleasure, friends, etc.; but they all agree in this, that they may be taken away from him, without in any way essentially altering his character. What a man may *be* is summed up in the attributes of his three spiritual faculties, (1) intelligence, (2) affection, (3) will, none of which can be altered without altering his character, that is, without making

him different from what he is. It is in terms of these that all human worth and all civilization must be estimated. Take from a man all that he has, leaving him all that he is, and you have not subtracted one iota of his moral worth.

It is obvious, then, that moral ends must be expressed in terms of being, that is, of intelligence, affection, and will, and not in terms of having. The only relation which having can bear to moral ends is that of means, enabling their possessor to reach such ends. If it be said that there is a third class of ends, not included under either being or having; that a man may act purely for the good of others, or purely for love of God, expecting no return of any kind; this will only show a misconception with regard to the nature of those ends which consist in being. It is the striking peculiarity of these ends that no man can attain them alone. In advancing towards them, he must take the world with him. Intelligence, affection, and will have no meaning save in a world that can be known, loved, and bettered. If a man is wise, he will understand the world; if he is loving, he will love the world, and especially his fellow-men; if he is strong in will, he will better the world. He cannot do otherwise. And he will reach a far better and purer result, if he acts with a view to the plenitude of his own being, in its threefold aspect, than if he has his eye continually on the state of the world, and labors to reduce it to an ideal or fanciful Utopia. He will do better, if his daily and hourly question is, *Am I what I ought to be in knowledge, affection, will?* than if it is, *How can I bring the world nearer to my fancied ideal?* In truth, a good man exerts a far deeper and nobler influence by what he is than by what he does. As Schiller puts it,—

“Noblesse is found in the ethical world too: commoner natures
Pay you with that which they do; nobler with that which they are.”

And, after all, a man's deeds can have no other ultimate end than to increase the plenitude of his own being and of that of his fellows.

Now, since the end of all action is, primarily, plenitude of being for him who acts, it follows that, if such plenitude, once

attained, could be annihilated by any external power or will, there would be no rational ground for moral action, but at best only for utilitarian or prudential action. The very existence of morality, therefore, implies the immortality of the moral subject, as a being of intelligence, affection, and will. This was clearly seen by Kant, and, indeed, the inner history of humanity shows us that the belief in immortality is bound up with the belief that moral life is a struggle for plenitude of being, or, which is the same thing, unity with God, who is the absolute plenitude of being, in its triple manifestation.

It seems important to insist upon this result at the present time, when the question whether man be immortal is so often, either explicitly or implicitly, answered in the negative, and when so many attempts are made to construct ethical systems on the basis of this negative. I know of no such system that can be called in any degree successful. They are all marred by one or another of three capital defects. Either (1) they confound the prudential with the moral, or (2) they regard the moral law as a blind, mysterious imperative, commanding us to act in a certain way, without telling us why, and, therefore, treating us as irrational beings, or (3) they call upon us to aid in realizing some earthly Utopia of social well-being, without assigning any other reason for so doing than the baseless and ineffective one, that it is right to be altruistic. If we ask why it is right, no rational answer is forthcoming. I am convinced, partly by so many conspicuous failures, but mainly by the force of logic, that no true system of ethics can be constructed, except on the supposition that the moral agent is an immortal being, striving to realize the plenitude of being in himself, and compelled, in so doing, to take intelligent, loving, and helpful account of the whole world, both as a means of reaching his end, and as a sphere for the manifesting of that end, when it shall be reached. A system so constructed satisfies every rational and emotional demand of the individual agent, and at the same time lays upon him the ineluctable necessity of being, in the very highest degree, altruistic.

Assuming, then, that the moral agent is, as such, necessarily

an immortal or eternal being, whose end is the plenitude of being, manifested as intelligence, affection, and will, let us consider what the ethical code of such a being will be. Obviously, it will be very different from that of a mere temporary being. The man who looks forward to a long life will provide for the future in a very different way from the man who knows that he must die to-morrow. For a stronger reason, the man who knows or believes that he must live forever, will prepare for the future in a very different way from him who believes that his career closes with this earthly life. But, again, a being who may become as if he were not at any moment, and is certain to become so within a few years, can have no rational interest in striving after plenitude of being either for himself or his fellows. Such a being, if he is wise, will not seek to deprive himself of the satisfaction obtainable through his powers as they are, by a laborious effort, which may be interrupted at any moment, to increase those powers. It may, I think, be laid down that the highest rational aim of a mortal being is pleasure; only an immortal being can rationally strive after plenitude of being. If to-morrow we die, then let us eat and drink or otherwise indulge our appetites, passions, or tastes!

The first commandment in the ethical code of an eternal being will read:

BE AT EVERY MOMENT ALL THAT YOU CAN BE, that is, be as wise, as loving, and as strong in will as is possible for you. This differs but formally from the great commandment quoted by Jesus from the book of Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;" for loving God means resembling him in his plenitude of being.

The second commandment, a supplement to the first, showing how it may be obeyed, is:

LET YOUR INTELLECTUAL INTEREST, YOUR AFFECTION, YOUR ACTIVITY OF WILL, BE PROPORTIONED TO THE WORTH, THAT IS, TO THE PLENITUDE OF BEING, POSSESSED BY THE DIFFERENT BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE. There can be no doubt that all immoral actions are due to a false distribution of affection,

which again is due to a false intellectual estimate of the comparative worth of objects. On the other hand, moral actions are actions springing from affections distributed according to the true worth of things, as estimated by intelligence.

These are the two fundamental and all-embracing moral laws, from which all other moral laws may be derived. *Plenitude of being, in its intrinsic order and fulness, is the end, sanction, and norm of human action.* It is this that settles the question of what is morally high and low. Persons who feel this distinction strongly are often at a loss to answer the question, On what grounds do you call one kind of action higher than another? or, Why do you call the man who spends his life in alleviating suffering or misery a higher being than him who spends it in sensual pleasure? They have generally to fall back upon some subjective feeling, which they claim authority for by calling it the "moral sense;" but the real answer is, that one kind of action or man is morally higher than another, because it or he has greater plenitude of being than that other,—i.e., exhibits more intelligence, love, and will.

We can now readily see what the nature of the moral process is. It consists of three steps:

First. The will, directed upon the plenitude of being, which is its first, final, and only object, incites the intellect to discover the true order of being, in terms of intelligence, affection, and will, or of proximity to these. Now, the will, as will, directs itself upon this object, and cannot do otherwise without ceasing to be will. The very definition of will is tendency towards plenitude of being. This tendency the will never belies, however much the intellect may fail to recognize wherein plenitude of being consists. In every act which man, as man, performs, he seeks fuller being. The man who commits suicide in the desire for annihilation has already ceased to act as a man; whereas he who, like Faust, attempts to do so in order to rise "zu neuen Sphären reiner Thätigkeit" (to new spheres of pure activity), is still, though erring, entirely human. It would, of course, be impossible for the individual intellect to discover the true order of being in a degree sufficient to make moral

action possible, were it not aided by the long experience of the race, which, through manifold gropings and blunderings, has been gradually discovering the comparative value of things. Even now the process is far from complete, and this is one of the chief reasons why the moral life of the world is still so unsatisfactory. Moral education, to a large extent, consists in imparting to the individual the moral estimates of the race, and, indeed, this is the chief debt that the individual owes to the race. How long it has taken to discover that intelligence, affection, and will are the only things in the universe that have an intrinsic value, and that all other things depend for their value upon their relation of subservience to these! And how little is understood even now of the relative worth of objects and actions! We know, indeed, that in the order of being the Supreme Plenitude, or God, comes first, and that other beings follow in their order of proximity to this; but how poorly we understand this order! The causes which prevent the intellect from recognizing the true hierarchy of beings are mainly two: (1) its dependence for its material upon sense-perception, and (2) its liability to be distracted and confused by the importunate concupiscence of the senses themselves. The former contracts the range of its action, and therefore makes its conclusions partial and imperfect; the latter paralyzes that action itself. When, with these drawbacks, the intellect comes to stamp things with a false value, the will in dealing with them, as so stamped, necessarily acts immorally, since the very essence of immorality lies in dealing with things or beings in a manner inconsistent with their true worth.* When the intelligence has made some advance in arranging the beings of the world on a scale of worth, then,

* This is admirably brought out by Æschylus in the lines (Agam., 222-24, Dind.),—

βροτοῖς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις
τάλαινα παρακοπὰ
πρωτοπήμων.

(For what emboldens mortals is the low-minded, pitiful, counterfeit stamp, the first parent of evil.)

Second. The will rouses the affections to distribute themselves in proportion to the different grades of worth thus discriminated. This is an extremely arduous task, because man's nature tends to develop all kinds of disorderly affections, and it is only by strong efforts of will that he can bring these under control. Here the individual has to stand almost alone, and fight out the moral battle for himself,—a battle which ends only when the inordinate affections are subjected to the rule of the worth-assigning intelligence. It is often maintained that man has little or no control over his affections. If this were true, we should have good reason for moral despair. But it is not true. Man can radically alter his affectional nature by a voluntary direction of serious attention, by what, in other times, was called meditation, and by acting in accordance with the estimates of intelligence, even when it does not carry the affections with it. Meditation is, in our time, so much a lost art, that its moral significance has almost ceased to be recognized. And yet we have the best of evidence, which any one may verify by experiment, that quiet, persistent occupation of the mind with worthy things gradually generates a love for them, while a resolute refusal to let unworthy things occupy the attention, in time induces an aversion to them. But this process is very much accelerated when the person who is striving to "purge" his affections acts, in obedience to his intelligence, as he sees he would act if they were purged. It is this sort of action that constitutes what we rightly call the moral struggle, and not unfrequently virtue, as distinguished from goodness or worth (*ἀρετή*), the result of that struggle. In Dante's *Purgatory*, which is simply an institution for bringing inordinate affections under the control of the intelligence, we find in every circle just these two means employed: (1) meditation, and (2) right action, which is laborious and painful only because it runs counter to the disordered affection. For example, the proud meditate upon the Lord's Prayer, and go about bowed to the earth with heavy weights; the wrathful meditate on "Behold the lamb of God," etc., and walk about in irritating, blinding smoke, and so on.

Third. The will having, with the aid of the intelligence, succeeded in making the affections distribute themselves in proportion to the worth of things, now stands in a true and normal relation to these, and therefore, when it acts, acts spontaneously with due regard to this worth. Hence it is now free and, in the strictest sense, good; for, as Kant says, the only truly good thing in the world is a good will. And here, indeed, we must draw a distinction between the moral and the good, between virtue and worth. In modern times this distinction is so far lost sight of, that we frequently hear the exclamation, "Virtue for virtue's sake!" which is as absurd as if we were to say, "Surgery for surgery's sake." "Virtue for goodness' sake," on the contrary, is the height of rationality; for goodness, or plenitude of being, is the sole end of all virtue. This is the reason why, while we say that God is good, we never say that he is moral or virtuous. It is also the reason why we admire virtue and love goodness. Nobody thinks of admiring God. Virtue is only the way to goodness, and we are far from saying the best that can be said about a man when we call him virtuous. The truth is, the virtuous man does good in spite of his nature, the good man by reason of his nature. In other words, with the former, virtue is unnatural; with the latter, natural.

In saying that the virtuous man does good in spite of his nature, we are, of course, using the word "nature" in a restricted sense. The truth is, that every man, in his present condition, has two natures, frequently at war with each other, a sensuous and instinctive nature, which seeks satisfaction without regard to anything but itself, and an intelligent and volitional nature, which includes, and sees that it must include, the whole world in its scheme of self-satisfaction. His duty, as a moral being, is to bring these two into harmony, by subordinating the former to the latter. Let us consider what this means:

Sense, as such, has a very limited range, and hence its correlate, instinct, can be satisfied with very finite things. Intellect, on the contrary, from its very nature, knows no limits; and hence its correlate, will, can be satisfied with nothing less

than the infinite. If that infinite were unattainable, man's gifts of intelligence and will would be the cruellest of mockeries, and human life the saddest of tragedies. Man himself would be

"a monster, . . . a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him."

Thus it appears that a man's duty is laid upon him by his own nature, which imperatively demands its realization in the plenitude of being. This plenitude is not to be found in the narrow world of sense and instinct, which offers only limited and temporary satisfactions; it must, therefore, be sought in that of intellect and will, which, indeed, are the faculties that make the demand. For this reason, it can only be by belying his nature, as the subject of intellect and will, that a man can withdraw himself from the duty of rising above sense and instinct, and realizing in himself the fulness of God. If a man should say, "But if I choose to shirk this duty which my nature lays upon me; if, closing the eyes of my intellect and binding the hands of my will, I manage to make myself comfortable on the level of sense and instinct, what is there to prevent me? Why am I doing wrong? You may say I miss a great deal; but I shall never know it, and therefore be none the worse," the answer is, "That would be excellent reasoning, indeed altogether unimpeachable reasoning, if your career were bounded by the life of sense and instinct; but you are forgetting the most momentous fact, that it is not, and cannot be, so bounded. While you have sense and instinct to take refuge in, you can turn your back upon the claims of intellect and will; but ere long that refuge will fail you, and intellect and will will prefer their claims unopposed. Then you will find yourself face to face with an inner authority which you will be forced to recognize, which you will be unable to evade, and which you will be conscious of having disregarded. Your goal, the plenitude of being, will be conjured up before you in all its most sacred majesty; your will will crave it with all the infinite force of its nature;

and it will be beyond your reach. The result will be hell, not indeed a hell of tortured sense and baffled instinct, but the far more awful hell of confused intellect and fettered will, that is, of tormented conscience; * for conscience is, at bottom, nothing but will correlated with intellect." †

This reply shows us the meaning of duty, and suggests the answer to the much-vexed question regarding the nature and origin of ethical authority. The guardians of revelation tell us that the origin of this authority is the miraculously revealed will of God; Kant places it in a mysterious, "categorical imperative;" sentimentalists ascribe it to a "moral sense," and so on. The truth is, it lies in the very essence of our nature, which holds in potency the plenitude of being, along with an authoritative will to realize the same in consciousness. And here we must beware of confounding will with impulse. All impulses run towards the satisfaction of instincts; intelligent will alone aspires to plenitude of being. All moral authority comes from intelligent will, and is simply and solely the expression thereof. But will, in so far as it is intelligent, is the will of God; and hence there is nothing wrong in saying that the source of ethical authority is the will of God, provided we do not regard that will as something of which our will is not the image and likeness. Furthermore, there is nothing at all absurd in the belief that, if man, during his physical life, should paralyze his intellect and will by devotion to sense and instinct, the divine will should strive to impart fresh vigor to both by what would seem to be a miraculous revelation. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive that the plenitude of love should do anything else. Such a revelation would not shift the seat of authority; it

* Of course, this hell is a matter of very common experience even in this life, in the form of remorse, which is simply the protest of spurned intellect and will against the rule of sense and instinct. Repentance, or purgatory, is a yielding to this protest.

† There are few more fatal blunders in ethics than that which makes conscience a distinct, primitive faculty, a kind of sentiment, akin to the æsthetic sense. Such a sentiment, if it existed, would deprive the moral law of that which is its very essence, a clearly recognizable authority.

would merely enable that authority to make its voice heard above the tumult of sense and instinct. Nothing could possibly be revealed to man that was not among the possibilities of his own being from the first. Thus far we have been moving in the region of theory, which has shown us that the ethics of an eternal being consist in loyal obedience to enlightened will, which seeks plenitude of being, in its three aspects of intelligence, affection, and will. It now behoves us to descend into the region of practice, and show how such ethics will affect the actions of men in the every-day relations of life. We have now to ask, How will a man, feeling that he lives but to realize in himself the eternal fulness of God, act?

In the first place, such a man, having laid his plans for eternity, and feeling assured that his purpose cannot be frustrated by any happenings outside of himself, will live with diligence and seriousness, but without haste, trepidation, or worry. He will know neither fear, doubt, nor despair, so long as he remains true to himself. He will have no anxiety about outward results. Failure in temporal projects will be as welcome to him as success, so long as he feels sure that, in striving to carry them out, he has acted with all the intelligence, affection, and energy possible for him. By such action he will feel that he has made God responsible, and this is the whole secret of a blessed life.

In the second place, he will look upon all the things of sense and ambition—wealth, honor, power, friends, family, etc.—as means to enable him to reach his goal.* When they cease to do this, he will be glad to part with them. Hence he will not strive after possession for the mere sake of possession or

* It may seem a strange thing to say that a truly moral man will regard his family and friends as means for the attainment or manifestation of his own perfection; but if we reflect that he cannot possibly use them for *these* ends, except in so far as he treats them as ends in and for themselves, the strangeness of the assertion will vanish. To say that a man values family and friends because they help him to develop and display generosity, is surely to attribute to him a lofty view of both. No man can treat another as a slave or chattel without injury to his own moral nature.

pleasure, but will be content with what he can use for his one ultimate end. In the same way, he will avoid all public recognition, except in so far as this may help him to benefit others. All display he will abhor and sedulously eschew. His motto will be, Love to be unknown (*Ama nesciri*). He will, indeed, let his light shine before men; but, like the spirits in Dante's *Paradise*, he will take care to hide himself behind his light. At the same time, knowing that he can shed the light of intelligence, love, and will upon others only in so far as he himself is a radiating source of these, he will use every endeavor to be as much of a self as possible, developing all his powers through every experience that does not involve a lessening of his own being.* In this he will be cheered by the consciousness that what he gains is gained forever.

In the third place, while he will take an enthusiastic interest in all those institutions whereby men are aided in rising to the plenitude of being,—in family, society, state, church,—he will treat them as means, not as ends, holding that they exist for him, not he for them. Whenever any one of them sinks into such a condition as to retard, instead of accelerating, man's progress towards his end, he will stand aloof from it and refuse to countenance it, until such time as it shall have returned to its true function, not considering his life too great a sacrifice to offer for the sake of effecting this return. His allegiance to any institution will be entirely conditioned by its relation to his ultimate end, to which, in the last resort, all his allegiance will be paid, and for the sake of which he will hold his life in fee. While he will not willingly be a rebel or an iconoclast, he will not shrink from being either, when man's highest interests are jeopardized. Recognizing, on the

* There is a school of ethical thinkers at the present day who seem to fancy that a man is on a low moral plane who desires eternal life and blessedness for himself, maintaining that one ought to be content with increasing the happiness of a mortal humanity for a few years, and sinking into nothingness afterwards. But, surely, what it is good to do for a few years it is infinitely better to do, in a continually increasing degree, to all eternity. There surely cannot be a more unselfish wish than the wish to be forever such a being as shall increase the blessedness of all that is capable of being blessed. To be content with the prospect of annihilation seems to me base pusillanimity.

other hand, that the effectiveness of institutions depends almost entirely upon the character of their members, rising and falling as this rises and falls, he will devote his chief external efforts to the elevation of character, as that "Kingdom of God and his righteousness" to which all other things are added; and this will have the effect of preventing him from attributing to institutions the shortcomings and sins which in reality belong to persons. The one question which he will put to every institution will be this: Does it aid in furthering intelligence, affection, will? If it does not, it will stand condemned for him. Hence, he will have no sympathy with those socialistic Utopias whose aim is to make men comfortable without the necessity of being heroic; heroism and death being in his eyes preferable to cowardly comfort and life.

In the fourth place, while showing all due regard for the feelings and views of his fellows, he will maintain a complete independence with respect to all social forms, demands, and caprices, yielding to them only in so far as they contribute to further the end he has in view. In all such matters he will strive after kindly rationality and unobtrusive simplicity. He will eschew all social gatherings whose aim is animal satisfaction, frivolous intercourse, or vain display. He will not waste an hour in trying to acquire the means of living in a style equal to that affected by his neighbors. In his apparel and house-furnishings he will confine himself to what is essential to health and neatness, setting an example of contempt for that luxury in the pursuit of which so many persons waste their lives. While appreciating art at its true worth, as a means of expressing to sense the highest visions of those whose faces are set towards the plenitude of being, he will not desire to make his home an art-gallery, but content himself with a few simple things, making beautiful the beauty of holiness. He will have no room in his house which the meanest and squalidest of his fellows may not freely enter without fear of defiling or injuring. In choosing his friends and associates, he will recognize no conventional distinctions of race, class, or creed, and no bond but that of a common

aspiration after the highest. He will belong to no "set" less extensive than humanity.

In the fifth place, he will have a rich inner life of communion with himself and with God, a life of which his outer activity will be but the reflection. This life will consist of meditation and prayer. Meditation will mean every form of quiet, self-collected reflection and study calculated to clear the vision and reveal the true meaning and worth of the things of the world; prayer, every form of aspiration towards the source of all truth, all beauty, and all goodness. Both these spiritual acts, though they constitute the very innermost life of the soul, have in our day fallen into considerable disrepute, the first, because it has come to be regarded as a lazy dreaming, or fruitless play of the imagination, about certain historic facts or dogmatic definitions; the second, because it is conceived to be an attempt to enlighten God, to rouse his interest, and to obtain from him special favors, which he might otherwise be indisposed to grant,—an attempt which is obviously absurd and derogatory to God. But there is no need to limit the sphere of meditation except by the bounds of possible truth, and the above conception of prayer is a coarse, childish caricature. Let us quote some of the definitions of prayer offered by men who earnestly practised it and knew its effect. St. Basil says, "Prayer is the ascent of the mind to God, or the seeking of things descending from God;" St. Augustine, "Prayer is the pure affection of the mind directed upon God," and again, "Prayer is the ascent of the soul from things terrestrial to things celestial, the quest for supernal things, the desire for invisible things;" St. Thomas Aquinas, "We pray, not that we may alter the divine purpose, but that we may obtain what God hath decreed should be realized through the prayers of the saints;" and again, "We are commanded to unfold our desires to God in prayer, not that we may instruct him as to what we desire, but that we may direct our intellect and affection upon him." And St. Bernard says, "Let us ascend, therefore, on meditation and prayer, as on two feet. For meditation shows us wherein our defects lie; prayer obtains a remedy for these defects. The

former shows the way, the latter leads us by it." It is easy enough in these days of feverish, thoughtless outward activity, to sneer at meditation and prayer; but no one has a moral right to do so who has not seriously and persistently practised them and experienced their effects. He who has done this will claim no such right. At all events, the man whose heart is set upon attaining the divine fulness will have a rich inner life of meditation and prayer, and will come to the activities and trials of the outer practical world as a messenger from a higher sphere, a sphere of divine quiet and serenity.

Such, in my opinion, are some of the leading characteristics of the ethics of an eternal being. That they are very different from those of the ethics suitable for a temporal being (if, indeed, we can speak of ethics in connection with such a being at all) is surely obvious enough. He who lives for time will covet the things of time; he who lives for eternity, the things of eternity. The things of time are wealth, honor, position, power, etc., which perish in the using; the things of eternity are knowledge, love, strength of will, which grow with the using forever and forever.

In conclusion, I may perhaps be allowed to say that the form which the society of those whose powers are set upon eternal things will assume will be a church, or, as Jesus preferred to say, a Kingdom of God,—a kingdom of holiness, in which each subject will claim property only in what he *is*, holding all that he *has* as a mere temporary trust, to be used as intelligence and love shall dictate, for the highest spiritual ends, a kingdom which will correlate itself naturally with a civic state aiming at external freedom and justice, and offering the widest field for the attainment and exercise of every virtue. On the other hand, the natural form for the society of those whose powers are directed solely upon the goods of this temporal world will be a socialistic and industrial state, in which each citizen will aim at the greatest possible amount of possession, and will claim the right to enjoy as he pleases all that he possesses, without being called upon to exercise generosity or self-sacrifice towards any fellow-being. It is

between these two institutions, as the highest expressions of corporate life, that the world of the present day is called upon, and is trying, to choose. Can any one doubt what the ultimate choice will be?

THOMAS DAVIDSON.

NEW YORK.

REFORM WITHIN THE LIMITS OF EXISTING LAW.*

Not long ago I spoke on "Jay Gould; or, Ill-gotten Gains within the Limits of Law." The law cannot prevent—at least did not prevent, in this case—much that is contrary to right and justice. It furnishes an imperfect standard in morals. Because under the law we are free to do certain things, it does not follow that, morally speaking, we may do them. The law may not be able—and it may not be considered within the province of the law—to punish us for doing things that yet are hard, inequitable, and cruel. To use the law, then, as a measure of what we may and may not do is, to this extent, to ignore conscience altogether. It was thoughts of this sort that I wished to suggest by the title of my recent lecture.

But there is another side to the matter. It is sometimes said that the law not only permits wrong, but that it sanctions wrong, is virtually in collusion with it. And it must be admitted that this is sometimes true. But what I wish to ask now is, Is there anything in the law that hinders us from doing right? The right and wrong of government in general, I do not wish to discuss, but it is a pressing, personal question, Does government as now existing anyway compel us in a wrong direction? It is a question not unlike one often raised as to our general social system. How often do we hear it said that this system compels men to be selfish or grasping,

* A lecture given before the Society for Ethical Culture, Philadelphia, Sunday, February 19, 1893.